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will probably join with us in regretting, that the author has not taken more pains with his plot, in both instances ; that he has not labored more upon completing the characters, upon making the transitions more gradual and natural ; that he has not given the pieces that unity of spirit and impression, without which no drama, however poetical in single parts, can stand the test of cool criticism when the applauses of the theatre have died away. We are not at all prepared for the desperate crime of Bianca ; almost up to the very moment of the fatal deed, she has appeared to us

“ A perfect woman, nobly planned ; ”

and, when she sacrifices her brother's life, we experience a violent revulsion of feeling. The poet has wrenched the character from its natural bearings, and we are very unnaturally and undramatically shocked. The plot is not well *motivirt*, to borrow a word from German criticism. The springs of action are not well studied, and the drama, therefore, with all its merits and exquisite beauties, is not an organic whole ; is not what the ancients required by their doctrine of the unities. But no man can read these pieces without acknowledging that Willis has a genius for the drama, which, if he is willing to pay the price, which the highest dramatic excellence demands, the price of long-continued study and labor, — the labor lavished by the sculptor and painter upon their immortal works, — will set him among the foremost, if not at the very head, of the dramatists of our age.

ART. VII.—*Report of the Secretary of War, November 30th, 1839, accompanying the President's Message to Congress, December 2d, 1839.* 26th Congress, 1st Session. Senate Documents, No. 1. 8vo. pp. 530.

THE document, which we have made the subject of our remarks, is the annual exhibit of the Secretary of War to the President of the United States, of the military condition of the country. It is probably not much read by the people at large. A general impression may prevail that it is too professional to be well understood. With those who look

upon it with the appended reports, for the first time, this may be the case. To such, however, as are in the habit of reading, year by year, the documents on this subject, it becomes gradually familiar, and is easily comprehended in all its essential parts. Such a habit should undoubtedly pervade the whole community. Our *national defences* are of incalculable importance to every member of that community. They should be studied by every intelligent man as among the primary subjects that call for the attention of a true patriot. They embrace expenditures of great magnitude, and lead to results that are more permanent in their kind than almost any others that proceed from the administration of our government. This consideration should awaken reflection, and excite unusual interest. But it fails to do so. There is probably no subject which occupies the thoughts of a member of Congress, who takes his seat at Washington for the first time, so little as the provisions for national defence. One of the reasons may be, that State legislation,—the ordeal through which such members generally pass,—gives no experience in this respect. His want of acquaintance with them renders him dependent, *quoad hoc*, on any one who may be less ignorant than himself. He has some undefined notions of a proper distrust of all military institutions; this distrust arising from what he may have read of by-gone times, exhibiting the spectres of usurpation, oppression, and other evils, that sprung from unprincipled ambition, wielding the power of the sword. This feeling often interposes obstacles in the way of just, of necessary legislation. It occasionally prompts a maiden effort, as presenting one of the most ready themes for a declamatory *début*. And what has thus been said in an unguarded hour, in the hour of inexperience, merely as a flourish to open one's career, may be thereafter a rule of conduct, even against the dictates of more ripened judgment, from mistaken notions of consistency. Better knowledge in the outset, such as would be obtained from an annual examination of the War Department documents, would be useful in these cases both to the legislator and his constituents.

Our systems of national defence have had to encounter impediments, thrown in their way by ignorance, indifference, or prejudice, from the commencement of the government. We have had but two Presidents that promoted them with a zeal corresponding with their importance, namely, General

Washington and Mr. Monroe. General Washington came out of the Revolution with lessons of experience deeply engraved on his mind. But the time was unpropitious for strong or expensive measures. Besides, the public leaned with a heavy weight against all military providence. The armour worn in the late struggle had been thrown off with impatience, as if all further necessity for using it had ceased. We stood in almost utter and defenceless nakedness for a few years. It was only when the savages, — still as unpeased as if the treaty of 1783 had never been ratified between Great Britain and the United States, — hung over our interior frontier with the uplifted tomahawk and scalping-knife, and had already drenched many a hearth among our border settlements with blood, that a most reluctant heed was given to his warnings, and a small measure of national defence was meted out for the common protection. The army that was raised was limited most scrupulously to the precise wants of the moment. Not a file was added in consideration of future exigencies, or to build up a system of national defence. The seaboard at the same time had scarcely a semblance of a fortification. Every port had been open during the Revolution, and the propriety of rendering them less accessible did not seem to suggest itself to Congress. Indeed, General Washington, with all his rich experience, weight of character, and great services, giving such force to his recommendations, could do little more, throughout his administration, than keep up a show of defence on the interior frontier, where British encroachments, and Indian threatenings, and actual barbarities, called for protection with a voice that would not be silenced.

The administration which followed, having the *quasi* French war to provide for, was able to make some advances in the way of maritime defence. But nothing like a system was adopted; and all expenditures on this account were scrutinized with severity, and opposed with obstinacy. Indeed, the administration appeared to grow weak as the nation assumed an attitude of strength. Hence every measure that helped to build up the country, by promoting its ability to resist invasion, and avert injuries upon the national honor or interests, seemed likely to pull down the administration of the government in the same proportion.

Mr. Jefferson's administration began on principles that

warred strongly against any system of national defence. The party which carried him into power had been unfriendly to nearly every effort of the preceding administration, having for its object the support of such a system. Consistency called for an adherence to principles, which had been previously advocated with so much zeal, and which could not be abandoned, under the change of circumstances, without a just imputation of insincerity or vacillation. The army was reduced to a shadow,—a nominal force of about two thousand men. The injudicious concentration of the army of 1799 into “masses,”—the encampments at Oxford, Carlisle, and other interior places having no apparent or immediate bearing on the national defence,—may have contributed to raise the strong feeling that then existed against “a standing army.” The navy was also reduced ; each

“tall anchoring bark
Diminished to her cock.”

Whether the character of the times justified this almost entire abandonment of self-defence, it is not our present purpose to inquire. We can hardly imagine a condition, however, which would authorize a nation to disarm itself, with a Quaker-like reliance on a non-combatant spirit throughout the world. Such a gentle spirit never yet has prevailed, and we have little ground for hoping that it is likely to prevail for generations yet to come. It was soon found to be so in the times we are referring to. All equivocal signs, all doubts of the hostile feelings of foreign countries, shortly disappeared. Angry bickerings strongly marked our diplomatic intercourse. Clouds gathered, and threatened a storm. It was evident, that the United States were not to prove an exception in the world’s affairs. The common lot of nations belonged to them, though their situation was somewhat peculiar. Had they existed as a nation a century before, when maritime enterprise or maritime power was comparatively limited, the Atlantic might have been regarded as a barrier that would allow a domestic policy, having little reference to remote or European nations. But a new order of things had been introduced. Commerce had linked together far-separated shores ; and navies, by their force, distribution, and prowess, spread dominion over the ocean, and made the trident as efficient at sea as the sceptre on land. The United States were soon convinced, that their position in another hemi-

sphere did not exempt them from the necessity of being prepared to defend their rights, if they wished to have them respected.

Mr. Jefferson was a bold and ardent theorist. The severe collisions with European powers, and with the Barbary States, compelled him to depart from his pacific policy. With the latter, there being no alternative but offensive measures, these were resorted to with spirit and success. The naval prowess, exhibited before Tripoli, shed a brilliancy over his administration which had better suited that of his belligerent predecessor. But the difficulties with Great Britain seemed to admit a more peaceful remedy. We had a trade with her that was highly important. It was deemed probable, that she would rather abandon her system of "orders in council," her "impressment," &c. — the former infringing roughly on our commerce, the latter on our rights, — than lose our custom at her vast manufactoryes. It was an experiment to determine how far a nation could be brought to a sense of justice by an appeal to its pecuniary interests alone. Mr. Jefferson, in the sanguineness of his philanthropy, hoped so far to revolutionize the barbarous spirit of the age, as to make the *ultima ratio* of nations other than *bella, horrida bella*. If he had succeeded in establishing even one precedent in favor of this consummation so devoutly to be wished, his glory would have been as singular as elevated. But the experiment failed. The evil day would come. War was declared.

During the seeming delusion which preceded that event, when an opinion predominated that it might be averted, little preparation was, of course, made to meet it. The army had been somewhat augmented, and a few of the harbours were becoming fortified. This was done, however, rather to enforce the non-intercourse and embargo, than with a view to repel an enemy. And, when that enemy was designated by the declaration of war, had he, in the outset, manifested even ordinary enterprise in his offensive operations, there was not a city or town on our seaboard, that he might not have laid under contribution or destroyed. We were as vulnerable from head to foot as Achilles was in the heel. Efforts were made in the season of distress to remedy the evil. But while the storm is raging, the house cannot well be repaired. Fortifications could not be constructed under the batteries of hostile ships. Portsmouth, Boston, New York,

and Charleston were, fortunately, respected by the enemy, who could have penetrated, with some sacrifice, into the heart of each. It was only his unbelief in our helplessness that protected us at these accessible points. He saw the shield, and supposed it to be of triple brass, when one thrust of his spear would have proved it as permeable as the untanned hide.

As soon as we escaped from this war, Mr. Monroe, who was a thoroughly practical man, resolved to seize the opportune moment, when its warning lessons were still fresh in the public mind, to establish a system of national defence. He well knew, as a tried soldier, that parts of it would require the labor of years to accomplish ; while others might be the work of a season. His efforts were directed to preserve the army upon a footing commensurate with the wants of the extended frontier. In this he did not fully succeed. He regarded this, however, as a subordinate consideration. The navy was more easily enlarged, or a consent obtained to provide for its gradual enlargement. This was much. But armies and navies are a locomotive defence, and comparatively perishable. Our seaboard called for a permanent defence, such as every well-ordered, well-secured maritime nation possessed. Without fortifications, troops and vessels had but half their efficiency. Such fortifications Mr. Monroe deemed of primary importance. He traversed the whole Union to judge for himself. The whole ground came under his view. Not that he looked into details, or expected to comprehend them. These he left for abler or more professional hands. But he wished to speak from observation, though generally, on the subject. Furnished with reasons drawn from these various sources, he led to the establishment of a system of permanent defence of the whole maritime frontier, (founded on actual surveys of every part, and profound considerations of their connexion and relative importance,) that found support in a large majority of Congress. Appropriations were made that advanced each class of works, step by step, according to their claims for precedence, towards completion. This was an honorable era for the United States. It was marked by a course of legislation in respect to the national defence, that looked to the country, and the whole country ; to the future as well as the present. The works thus projected called for large appropriations, which annually awakened an opposition from the uninstructed or the

prejudiced. This opposition, however, was feeble and ineffectual. Our harbours gradually assumed an aspect of capability of strong defence. The large cities within their bosom began to look with confidence on these barriers around their wealth and prosperity, and to feel a security, in the event of war, against sudden and unexpected attacks.

We have formerly had occasion to speak of this system of fortifications in detail.* At this time we allude to it only to illustrate our remark, that only two Presidents have understood and promoted such a system,—General Washington most heartily but unsuccessfully,—Mr. Monroe with equal zeal and with triumphant success. But the latter could only establish the plan and begin the work. His successor carried it on, under the impulse it had received. Unfriendly feelings, however, were augmenting with each year, excited by the annual demand of new millions at each session of Congress, and occasionally acquiring great strength from signal errors in some of the engineers, which sometimes led to the waste of hundreds of thousands, before detection could arrest it. The *Pea Patch* long stood in the way of each appropriation, as a warning against confiding so large sums to miscalculation, carelessness, or ignorance,—all equally disastrous in their results. But just reasoning fortunately still prevailed. The harbours, gradually, grew stronger and more defensible with each year. An error in one part was not permitted to frustrate the whole plan. The valuable skill of the many was not discarded because of the deficiency of a few. Such errors were perhaps unavoidable, particularly in cases like the *Pea Patch*, where probably no plan of laying or forming a foundation, destined to sustain so heavy a superstructure, could combine with it a certainty of adequate strength.

These untoward circumstances often diminished the appropriations, and delayed the advance of the works; but their progress towards completion was generally constant, until Mr. Cass, while in charge of the War Department, made his elaborate Report on the subject of our national defences, which was intended to show the inexpediency of pursuing the system established under Mr. Monroe, excepting in certain specified cases. This intention was fulfilled with great ingenuity, and an immediate reaction appeared to take place in the public mind. But this was not all. An attack

* See *North American Review*, Vol. XXIII. pp. 245 *et seq.*

was made, in the same Report, on the propriety of having ended some of the principal works embraced in that system, particularly those at Old Point Comfort and at Newport, tending to weaken the confidence of the public in those most important parts of our national defence, and to warrant a belief that most of the money expended upon them had been uselessly, if not wastefully, applied.

We have not space to examine fully these military heresies, though we cannot permit them to pass without a few animadversions, as they come from high authority, had much influence over public opinion at the time, and may still injuriously affect the progress of our fortifications. It is well known that the late Secretary of War has a strong and quick mind, enabling him to comprehend most subjects with unusual promptitude. A mere glance with him is often more than a deliberate survey with others. But there are some subjects, the full understanding of which depends so much upon experience, laborious calculation, and a long and minute examination of all their bearings, that those intuitive minds are often baffled, and left to random and specious conjectures. The critical remarks of the late Secretary of War, on the works at Old Point Comfort, show that he regarded them under one phasis only, when they present others that equally claimed his observation. He appears to have considered them as intended only to exclude an enemy from the country, who, he says, would turn aside from such a strong point, and thrust himself in at other accessible quarters, which are found above and below on the coast. Old Point Comfort, he admits, should be fortified, but only by a work that would resist a *coup de main*, not by one, like that which is now there, that embraces "about sixty-three acres" (to use the Secretary's own descriptive language).

Those who have only a slight recollection of the many strong reasons urged by the Board of Engineers, which digested this system of maritime fortifications, will bear distinctly in mind, that the "occlusion of this roadstead," that is, the exclusion of the enemy from it in time of war, was but a subordinate object among the many comprehended in the plan. Notwithstanding all the warnings of the approach of war, commercial enterprise or cupidity urges its efforts up to the last moment of safety, and the declaration can never take place in such a country as ours without finding, probably,

millions of property still afloat on the ocean. The reason may be, that profit increases with the danger. This, combined with the never-failing hope that peace may yet prevail, leaves an interest upon the high seas of an enormous amount at the breaking out of hostilities, calling for all such protection, or means of escape, as a government can bestow. Such protection could not be afforded by any naval force, as no system of convoys would be established at that early and perhaps unlooked-for season of trouble. Harbours of refuge alone can be effectual. Known to be ever open and in readiness to shelter all that claim security within them, they are the points to which the flying vessels, having snuffed the scent of danger afar off, direct their course. In arranging a system of maritime defence, not to have carefully provided such harbours, would have been a neglect, alike discreditable to the projectors, and injurious to the country. It was almost a primary consideration with the Board of Engineers. And yet the Report we are alluding to makes scarcely a mention of this object. It says, that no enemy would sit down before Fort Monroe, which it would cost much time and blood to besiege, when his purpose could be fulfilled by entering many other places on the Chesapeake. And this suggests a sufficient reason for having substituted for that work a small one, that would resist a *coup de main*, or preserve the place from hostile occupation. Little apprehension is entertained that Fort Monroe or Fort Calhoun will be besieged ; not that they are impregnable, particularly the first, against which regular approaches can be made. But a regular siege consumes many days, during which relief could always be afforded.

There was a double object in constructing these works. They were intended to mount a battery sufficient to command the entrance of the Roads, and to combine a strength — not a strength for merely resisting a *coup de main*, which might be found in a blockhouse, but such as should discourage all attempts at a siege. The Report says, that no enemy would deem it worth while to conquer Fort Monroe, when he could penetrate the country at other undefended points. If the object were merely to destroy a few towns, or lay them under contribution, or to make predatory incursions beyond the coast, we might readily admit, that the fortifications we have been erecting at so much expense, would be left to waste their strength in harmless distance. But

we may suppose a higher object in such a case. We may easily suppose that an enemy, powerful and enterprising, wishing to distress us in the highest degree at the opening of hostilities, would look to the possession of Hampton Roads as more likely to enable him to do so than any other attainable object. He might well expend much blood and treasure to obtain this possession, which, at certain seasons of the year, is the only certain harbour of refuge on the coast, as it would probably throw into his hands an amount of property, that would many times counterbalance the cost of the acquisition ; besides the immense loss that would result to the other side, — a loss, we doubt not, that would equal the expense of constructing these important works, which are intended to avert such a disastrous event. It is inferable from this Report, that the late Secretary, if it were in his power, would undo, in a great measure, what has been done, both at Old Point Comfort and at Newport. Fortunately, — very fortunately, we think, — for the country, these cardinal parts of our system of maritime defence were too nearly completed to be affected by a condemnation, even in so high a quarter. Neither the present nor future generations can be deprived of the incalculable benefits that may, in the hour of war or danger, — and they are directly beneficial at no other time, — arise from their construction.

We cannot refrain from dwelling yet a moment longer on the apparent attempt to measure the utility of Fort Monroe, as a surveyor would a lot of land, by its number of acres. Fort Monroe is a large work, and may be even larger than any single work in Europe, as the Report states ; though we see nothing in this comparison to prove that the American work is *too* large. It does not occur to us that there is any one work in Europe that is of equal national importance. But we doubt whether the Board of Engineers directed any inquiries to this point. It undoubtedly looked alone to the importance of the place to be defended, and to the number of guns required for such a purpose, and planned the work accordingly, without any reference to transatlantic precedents. The proposed armament of Forts Monroe and Calhoun is said to amount to about 650 guns, hardly two thirds of them intended for the former work. This would be the armament of several line-of-battle ships, and may not be thought excessive for the security of a roadstead

of such primary importance. The calculation could not, of course, be precise. It was proper to adopt a liberal maximum. Having determined the number of guns, the next step would be to dispose of them. In this case, it was determined to arrange them in two tiers, a greater number being objectionable on many obvious accounts. These guns, in a work like Fort Monroe, must necessarily be on one or two faces, — those which command the water. Enclosing the rear, or connecting the front batteries by a secure wall, was a subordinate part of the operation, but to be done according to fixed principles of engineering. This rear wall could not be run across over the shortest line, in order to diminish the number of acres to be included in the area. It must conform to certain angular prolongations, necessary to give it a defensible character. Fort Monroe thus came to embrace "sixty-three," or more "acres"; nevertheless, we may be permitted to regard it as a work that has no excess of armament, nor any unnecessary space within its walls. The great purpose for which it was constructed, — a purpose placing it far higher in the scale of importance than Gibraltar, with which, in point of "acres," it is compared in this Report, — demanded "ample room and verge enough" for these heavy batteries, and for the twenty-seven hundred men, who are to garrison it in time of war. This complement includes the men at the guns, and a thousand, or more, to spare for emergencies, to defend the rear walls, &c.

We have, perhaps somewhat out of season, made these remarks on this famous, and, in many of its parts, most excellent Report of the late Secretary of War, because we feel a conviction (felt at the time it came out), that it is a document, in other parts, of the most injurious tendency of any that has come from the War Department since its establishment. Mr. Calhoun, we are persuaded, will ever be regarded as a benefactor to his country, for lending the efforts of his strong mind to establish the present system of fortifications. No system of such magnitude, and embracing such a vast variety of ramifications, could be supposed to obtain universal assent. The present system was founded on actual and minute surveys, and after a most deliberate and able consideration of all its bearings and objects; and the public was satisfied that good reasons, such as an accomplished board of engineers concluded to be sufficient, had led to

its recommendation and adoption. All that remained was to fulfil the plan as fast as the resources of the country admitted ; occasionally modifying its details, or parts, as new or unlooked-for circumstances demanded or warranted. Such circumstances occurred with respect to one of the classes of the fortifications, which could be so properly superseded by steam-batteries, brought into use since the Board finished its labors. If the Report had confined its recommendations to modifications like these, it would have received the approbation of all reflecting men. But, at a time when our foreign relations were growing more threatening, and our seaboard called for renewed exertions to strengthen its defences, this Report seemed to throw a doubt over the propriety of past expenditures, and unsettled much of the system for the future. Congress now proceeds with each appropriation reluctantly and doubtfully. It will be some time before a general impression can prevail, that we still have a system, which justifies the public confidence, and which, if carried out, will place the nation in a condition of comparative, if not positive, respectability and security.

When our harbours shall once be adequately protected by fortifications, more than half the battle will be fought. Garrisons are raised up with comparative facility. While forts, such as are suited to coast defence, are the result only of many years' labor, troops, of more or less competency, may be formed, if not with the promptitude of Cadmus, at least in a comparatively brief time. Let the armour be prepared, and those who may wear it will always be found.

The Report of the present Secretary of War is an important document on this subject. Mr. Poinsett has administered his department with great zeal. All his energies have been devoted to the advancement of the important interests confided to his care. He has a true military spirit, and has had some military experience. Perhaps the latter has led him, occasionally, to rely too much on himself, and less on the experience of others within his reach, than would have been expedient. We are led to think so from the failure of several of his prominent suggestions, which have generally proposed changes too abrupt, new, or extreme, to be successful. Much has been done by him, however, and more may still be expected from his active mind. By the Report we are now referring to, it appears that he has personally

examined many of the harbours, and he sums up his observations in this strong language, which should awaken a solicitude, and even alarm, throughout the whole country. "They," (the defences of our maritime frontier,) he says, "were found, as had been before stated, unfinished, unarmed, and totally inadequate to protect the harbours they are intended to guard from attacks of a comparatively small force." Again he says, "Our principal cities on the seaboard are at this time exposed to be laid under contribution, and our navy-yards to be destroyed without the possibility of defending them." If we could believe this to be true in its full extent, we should think the condition of the country deplorable indeed. We trust, however, that his language is unintentionally exaggerated. Indeed, we feel sure that it is unwarrantably strong. But what deserves our unreserved belief is enough to startle every mind, anxious for the welfare and honor of the country.

What is at this time, or what was at the time the Report was made, the condition of our harbour fortifications? The Report says, that, "when the works now in progress in Boston harbour are finished, that place will be perfectly secure." This does not inform us at what stage in this progress these works are. It would have been satisfactory to know how far they have advanced, though we believe that one of the old works, which has been extensively repaired, is in a good condition for defence. Portsmouth is said to be "entirely defenceless." We are aware, that Fort Constitution at that place is an old and imperfect work. Still, we think, with a proper garrison and a proper armament (and we presume it has its old armament at hand), the place would not be entirely defenceless. With no better defence, it was unassailed during the last war. "Pensacola is exposed,"—we still quote the Report,— "and the important city and harbour of New York are still indifferently protected, and will remain so even after all the works now in progress shall be completed and armed." "Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah, and the ports in the Gulf, all require further protection."

Under the system of fortifications established in Mr. Monroe's time, many works have been constructed, the most important of which are at Old Point Comfort, at Newport, at or near Mobile, at New York, and in the neighbourhood of New Orleans. Other works have been constructed in North

Carolina, near Philadelphia (though the Pea Patch work has proved a failure), and at Savannah. Others may also be in progress. Thus, starting from the northeastern angle of the coast, we have Eastport, Portland, and some other places in Maine, and Portsmouth in New Hampshire, with their old works, which, with proper garrisons, would, at least, keep up a show of defence. They did little more the last war, but most of them with good effect. We have before remarked on the condition of Boston. None of these places are properly fortified, but all of them could be put in an attitude of defence. They are now as open as a common highway. Give each of them a garrison, and their situation would be widely different. They all, no doubt, have their old armaments. Let there be troops to man them, and none of them would be “exposed to be laid under contribution,” nor would the “navy-yard” at Boston “be without the possibility of being defended.” We can hardly believe the fact as we record it, that not one of these places has had a garrison since the Florida war began.

New York is a vast portal, which opens into an interior of incalculable wealth. It moreover commands a river, which sends the tide waters some hundred and fifty miles into that interior. Much has been done to render this portal inaccessible, and, when the works on Throggs-neck are finished, it may be considered as capable of making a good defence; though the Narrows can never be looked upon as sufficiently secure until a proper work be constructed on Staten Island, the works that are now there not deserving the least regard. New York is, therefore, without its proper, its essential, permanent defence. It could, however, be made comparatively safe by a suitable garrison. During the last few years it has been nearly denuded of troops. Flitting garrisons have occasionally occupied the forts; but, like birds of passage, they have waited only the coming of autumn to seek the south. It will scarcely be credited, that one of these forts, with a full armament, has been for some time past,—we will not say how long,—confided to one man; while the main work, overlooking it, and both standing, as it were, on the outer wall, has had little more of the *personnel de guerre*. Has there been an overruling necessity, during all this time, of leaving this primary mart of our country in such weak condition,—so weak, that when a foreign vessel of war passes in

or out, and proposes an exchange of salutes, the compliment often cannot be accepted ? With the rapacious war of Florida in mind, one can hardly answer this question satisfactorily. Every object proposed by that war, if attained an hundred fold, could not counterbalance the deep injury, and the deeper disgrace, of such a hostile occupation of the defences of that great city, as could at any moment be made, while they remain as they now are, and have been for some time past. These defences should never be one day without a garrison.

Philadelphia is better defended by her interior position. So is Baltimore. Either could probably throw into the works in its vicinity a force from its own population, before danger stood at its door. Not so Old Point Comfort. This work,—the first in size and importance on our coast,—is, and has been for some time, nearly as defenceless and accessible as any “sixty-three acre” farm in its vicinity. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Mobile, New Orleans,—all have been stripped of their garrisons in the same manner as the more northern parts of the Union. Florida has been the Aaron’s rod, which has swallowed up every thing.

We have confined ourselves, in these remarks, to the subject of works for the defence of the Atlantic coast. The manner of garrisoning such works, and the best disposition of the few regiments of the standing army in time of peace, present questions which we may find another opportunity to treat. The plan presented in the recent Report of the Secretary of War to the House of Representatives, on the reorganization of the militia, has important relations to the whole subject. That Report is under debate while we are writing ; and, for the discussion of its merits simply in the light of a scheme for an efficient national defence, we prefer to take a time when it will be more free, than it now is, from connexion with the policy of conflicting parties.
